You may think you know knife fighting theory through books, magazines, and martial arts training, but unless you've actually been in a knife fight, it's *all* theory!

The knife fighting techniques in *Put 'Em Down, Take 'Em Out!* were developed in one of the most violent environments on Earth—inside Folsom Prison. They are techniques that go far beyond what you will encounter on the streets.

In brief and simple language, this book explains the difference between knife fighting fantasy and knife fighting reality. Chapters include:

- THE BASICS OF KNIFE FIGHTING. The *realistic* aspects of knife defense and attack unknown by those who have never been in a knife fight.
- KNIFE FIGHTING MYTHS. Ludicrous knife fighting techniques perpetuated on TV and in the movies, as well as the absurd (and even dangerous) methods taught by martial art instructors.
- TRAINING. Direct, no-nonsense training methods that will maximize your chances of survival and success in a knife fight.

The majority of knife fighting "experts" out there are writers, not fighters—the battles they engage in take place on paper! With *Put 'Em Down, Take 'Em Out!*, you will learn the facts from a man who has been there and back, to help you deal with one of the deadliest encounters you will ever face on the streets.

DON PENTECOST

PUT 'EM DOWN, TAKE 'EM OUT!

Knife Fighting Techniques from Folsom Prison

WARNING

The techniques and drills depicted in this book are extremely dangerous. It is not the intent of the author, publisher, or distributors of this book to encourage readers to attempt any of these techniques or drills without proper professional supervision and training. Attempting to do so can result in severe injury or death. Do not attempt any of these techniques or drills without the supervision of a certified instructor.

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DON PENTECOST

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Introduction

Inside Folsom Prison, the maximum security penitentiary outside Sacramento, "fights" are resolved with deadly weapons, not fists. There are no exceptions. Because of this, knife fighting techniques are developed far beyond methods encountered on the street.

In brief and simple language, this book explains the difference between knife fighting fantasy and knife fighting reality. There are no "most important" pages in this book. What is contained within each sentence could make the difference between life and death.

I have eliminated the ludicrous, ineffective techniques that will not work in the real world against a determined opponent. The techniques in this book are uncomplicated and direct, just as a knife attack or defense must be.

I do not include my own personal experiences within Folsom Prison, nor do I discuss the activities of others. It just isn't done by those who've been there. Suffice to say here that no environment on Earth can equal the violence and intensity of America's "heavyweight" prisons. The knife fighting techniques in this book were perfected in that environment.

Chapter One

The Basics of Knife Fighting

The prerequisite to engaging in a knife fight is that you must first know the facts of a realistic attack. The simple explanation of a realistic attack destroys 99.9 percent of all existing knife fighting theories.

What do you base your knife fighting theories on? Have you ever seen someone killed with a knife? Have you ever killed anyone with a knife? Have you ever defended yourself from someone intent on killing you with a knife? Are your theories derived from television, movies, or magazines? Be honest with yourself.

The object in a knife fight will always be to kill the enemy as quickly as possible, with as little risk to you as possible. Remember this and apply it in your training.

THE DEADLIEST WEAPONS

The deadliest weapons are your mind and whatever weapon you have in your hand. If you brandish a knife, your opponent would be justified in using a gun against you. Of course, justification is only a consideration for "law-abiding" citizens and is irrelevant to criminals.

Staying alive is the primary reason why you should never give your opponent a chance to defend himself.

Be quick and brutal! When you use a knife, it is for one purpose only—to kill the enemy! Never give an opponent a chance to defend, think, or run.

Once you have accomplished your final objective, leave the scene of the attack as soon as possible, even though you may have been legally in the right. The only exception to this would be if you were defending your home.

EMPHASIS ON TECHNIQUE

You must remember that technique is not the determining factor in a fight. Who applies the technique and who receives the technique are the primary determinants.

Ruthless determination will overshadow technique or choice of weapon every time. The will to win is more important than the skill to win. In a fight, *mental attitude is crucial!* Determination is the only thing that will get you off the ground after being stabbed, shot, or punched.

No matter what techniques you end up using (grappling, punching, stabbing, or whatever), your fighting objective is to put the opponent physically down on the ground. After you have accomplished this goal, be certain he stays down.

The time frame of a knife attack is usually very short—it is often over in a matter of seconds. Keep this in mind when developing offensive and defensive techniques and through all aspects of your training.

MENTAL TACTICS

When was the last time you seriously tested your determination? You will never know what you will do in a certain situation until you are in that situation. The same is true of your opponent, no matter how confident he appears. Many who thought that they were the "world's deadliest man" laid down when faced with true adversity!

Most people are intimidated if they are confronted when they're alone. Remember, the first characteristic of a punk is the need for friends to back him up. Certain groups are notorious for this weakness. The second characteristic of a punk is seeing how far he can push you without any real intention of going one-on-one with you, i.e., seeing what he can get away with. The third characteristic of a punk is "conversation" after he realizes that he has bitten off more than he can chew.

If you need to make a point or verbal threat with any problem person, state your position calmly, quietly, and directly. Portraying yourself as a seemingly confident person with wide eyes and a quiet voice will make him think that you are very "intense." Some situations will require a more forceful statement and/or action. If this occurs, try to engage in confrontation on your own terms, such as time, location, or circumstances.

Most violent situations are not "blitz" attacks. They are more likely to be borderline cases that escalate into violent encounters, without clear-cut provocation on your part. If you have no fear of legal consequences, e.g., "doing time," then justification of your subsequent actions will not be a factor.

ADRENALIN AND FEAR

Every intelligent person instinctively experiences fear. You must learn to control that fear.

Adrenalin can be a positive or negative factor, depending on the individual. Do not let anyone convince you that adrenalin is always a positive experience.

Two areas that cannot be taught through a book, video, or even a qualified private instructor are pain control and adrenalin control. Like most "feelings," they can only be personally experienced or altered. Fear of pain and fear of injury are two of the greatest anxieties of the self-defense student.

A large part of mental toughness is acknowledging

fear but working through it. When you experience pain of any kind—be it smashing your thumb with a hammer, stubbing your toe, or being hit in the head with a rock—your first and immediate reaction must be anger, not submission.

Chapter Two

Knife Fighting Myths

Existing knife fighting myths can be your greatest enemy. Learn the three basic facts:

1) Experienced fighters do *not* lead with the knife.
2) Experienced fighters will *not* leave the knife hand extended and stationary after a thrust, allowing you a chance to apply a "hold."
3) An experienced fighter *will* hit you with his free hand—it is *not* paralyzed.

Examine existing publications and you will see that these three myths are the foundation of all their techniques.

LEADING WITH THE KNIFE

On television, the villain always leads with the knife. He begins an attack by thrusting the knife hand out so the hero can knock the weapon out of his hand. Not even on television, however, would someone kick or grab at a properly retracted knife hand.

Why do you suppose you never see the TV defender getting set up with the empty hand *before* the weapon-hand thrust? Simple. The individuals presenting this garbage have absolutely no idea what really happens

Leading with the knife. An experienced fighter will not do this.

In a knife attack, and thus haven't a clue as to defense. The fact is, an experienced fighter will have his knife hand held close to his side until the empty hand has done its job and created an opening. Only then is the knife ready to be thrust into the opponent's body. The knife is then quickly retracted and the assailant will continue to pump multiple stabs into the victim.

If realistic knife attacks were performed on television, all the heroes would be dead. Actors using knives cannot win on television because the knife is a trademark of the bad guy. Good guys use fists and guns.

Simply put, an experienced fighter will not lead with the knife when he's within striking range. It looks good for television, so the hero can conveniently disarm the villain, but intelligent people do not behave this way. Intelligent people would like to continue living.

Most martial art "knife defense" techniques also have the opponent leading with the knife. As soon as you add

Knife against knife is a scenario you will not often see on the street.

reality, practical stance and grip, retracted knife hand, empty-hand strikes, and a determined attacker, you must eliminate their prearranged techniques and theories.

Slashing (cutting from a semi-extended arm position) is another ludicrous knife-lead technique perpetuated through television and the martial arts. In reality, slashing techniques are prolonged and risky. Each time the knife hand is extended, a risk is taken. Extending the knife hand should only occur when you are going to stab your opponent, following an empty-hand strike. Besides, how could you slash someone if your "knife" is a sharpened piece of scrap metal or wood, pair of scissors, ice pick, or screwdriver?

KNIFE AGAINST KNIFE

Contrary to what you see in the movies, this is not a common situation. Your opponent generally will be either more heavily armed or less heavily armed than you. More importantly, one person will initiate the attack *before* the other.

You do not "face-off," giving the opponent a chance to defend himself.

This situation is similar to close-range shooting. In the real world, it would be highly unlikely that you would draw your weapon at the same moment as your opponent. Even if both individuals were carrying handguns, one person is going to initiate the attack and have the critical jump on the other.

Knife against knife (or handgun against handgun) is not a realistic scenario on which to base your training.

FACE-OFF

Television rules require a face-off, giving the hero a chance to defend himself and eventually disarm the villain. After watching enough of this trash, you might start to think that this is how street fighting really does happen. It doesn't.

Never "feel" your opponent out, giving him a chance to defend himself. Brutally attack without warning, with

only two things on your mind: 1) put him down on the ground, and 2) take him out!

Do not stand there after one stab and expect him to drop in his tracks. Keep pumping the knife into him, forcing him to drop!

COMMANDO TAKEDOWNS

Forget the television "commando" bullshit. This garbage does not work in the real world.

In the movies, you have probably seen the American Green Beret soldier quickly disarm and kill the enemy soldier. Typical scenarios:

1) The unarmed hero grabs the attacker's knife hand and stabs the enemy in the stomach with his own knife.
2) The hero flips the enemy soldier to the ground and then stabs him in the chest.

In the movies, again, we are dealing with the premise that the attacker will lead with the knife, will not use his empty hand, and will not offer any resistance once the defender makes his move.

You cannot force any technique in a real life-or-death situation. An opportunity must present itself. But be observant—an opportunity can present itself in the blink of an eye.

Never attempt an offensive technique while an attacker's knife hand is in the retracted position. In this situation, you should counter, not initiate, an attack. An experienced fighter will retract his knife hand too quickly for any offensive attack or hold to be applied.

MARTIAL ARTS MYTHS

It would take literally a lifetime to describe all the absurd martial art techniques passed off as "knife defense."

Martial art instructors are trying to deceive themselves and others that they have found an easy system to

eliminate the problem of violence and achieve "spiritual harmony." Fighting is violence, and it will never be eliminated by martial arts. Learning a martial art in order to avoid violence is tantamount to sticking your head in the sand.

Contrary to the teachings of "noted" knife fighting experts, certain accepted techniques are ridiculous and will get you killed in a real-life situation. Unarmed joint-lock takedowns against an armed opponent and kicking a knife out of an attacker's hand are just two of the more common examples. Such "sanitary" approaches make knife fighting acceptable to the general public—they do not burst the viewer's television fantasy bubble. The traditional martial arts are, in fact, busy perpetuating the most useless shit imaginable! These "noted experts" are writers, not fighters! The battles they engage in take place on paper.

Do you actually believe that you can engage in a life-or-death fight and not come in contact with the opponent? That is exactly what these individuals are trying to promote with such ridiculous techniques.

How would these techniques work if the opponent first struck with his empty hand to the eyes and then used the retracted knife hand as a quick follow-up blow? Joint-locks and kicks simply would not work against such real-life methods. Use of these techniques would result in the death of the technique user!

Such "scientific" techniques work very well only when there is little or no resistance. Yes, a wrist lock could be very painful, but so is having your hand crushed in a vise. The point is, it is ludicrous to attempt to apply either hold against an armed, determined opponent. Anyone who believes he could apply these techniques against a formidable opponent has never fought a formidable opponent!

Remember, *resistance* is what separates reality from fantasy. Without resistance, even the most absurd

techniques can be effective. Traditional martial art techniques are very effective, providing someone allows the technique to be administered. Techniques that "work" when there is no serious resistance are simply not worthy of your consideration. Beware the easy solution!

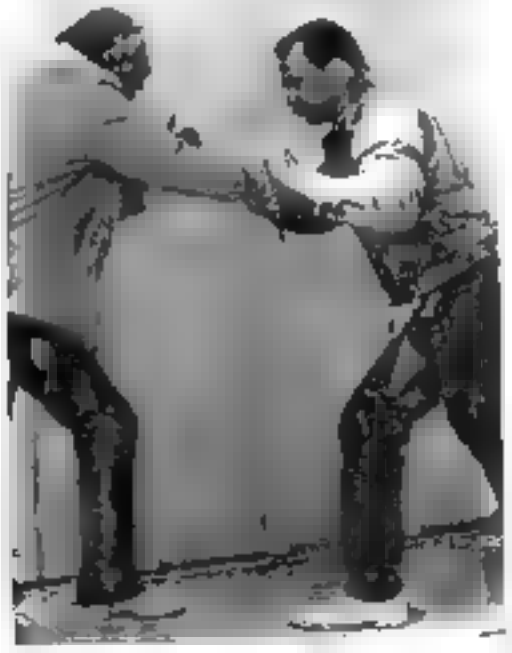
Examining all the ridiculous martial arts techniques would be both lengthy and boring. Ludicrous training methods include pressure points, joint-locks, come-alongs, high kicks, kata, and the like. All of these are tantamount to sticking your head in the sand and do not deal with reality. Real fighting can never be considered as "controlled technique" or "style."

The martial arts are selling a style. Eastern religion, philosophy, language, tradition, and culture do *not* promote effective self-defense. In fact, most martial artists are neither trained nor proficient streetfighters because, simply put, they do not fight.

Self-professed self-defense "experts" are very generous concerning the value of the martial arts for street defense. Allegedly, the only drawback to the martial arts is the time it takes to become a trained fighter. In actuality, there is no inherent self-defense value in the martial arts, no matter how many decades one studies. There is no inherent self-defense value in any "style." If your goal is personal protection, then training in the martial arts will be a negative detour from your objective.

Remember, the opponent with the knife is in control of the fight. He initiates the attack and maintains the upper hand because he has a weapon and you do not. Martial art publications are fond of showing how the attacker makes a thrust and then leaves the knife hand extended and stationary, letting the defender immediately gain control. The attacker then watches in an apparent trance while the defender applies technique after technique on him. Does this sound even remotely possible to you?

When fighting for real there should be more importance placed on *who* is fighting than *what* techniques are being used by you or your opponent. Fighting is a person, his mind, and his body. Fighting is not style and technique.



The "paralyzed arm" myth. The defender attempts a complicated wrist lock and is hit in the throat by the attacker's free hand. In a real encounter, the average defender would have never made it past the second photo.

Chapter Three

Knife Attack

In a knife fight why use techniques that will only stop a pussy? What happens when you have to fight a real opponent? Think about it, then read on!

KNIFE FIGHTING GRIPS

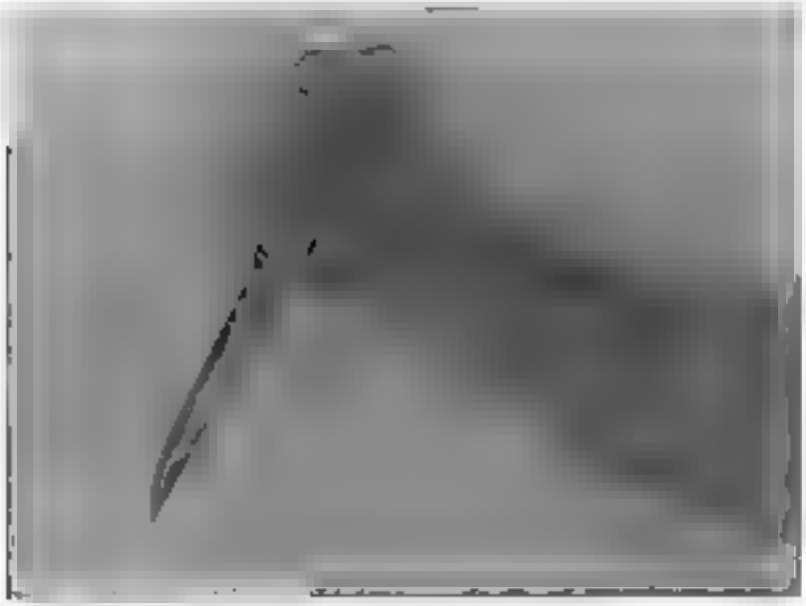
With all knife fighting grips, hold the knife as securely and tightly as possible to make sure it never leaves your hand during the attack.

Ice Pick Grip

This grip can be used effectively in rear attacks, when stabbing someone in the back. If you are able to surprise your opponent from the rear, however, it is not terribly important what grip you use!

The knife is held with a clenched fist with the blade extending out from the bottom of the hand (like using an ice pick).

The ice pick grip is not common in frontal assaults from a standing position, contrary to martial arts literature, and it is not common or effective when defending oneself. Some popular knife fighting books devote over half the pages to defense against overhead.



Ice pick grip.

ice pick grip fronta. attacks. Defending against a knife would be much easier if all you had to worry about were such telegraphed, single, overhead blows.

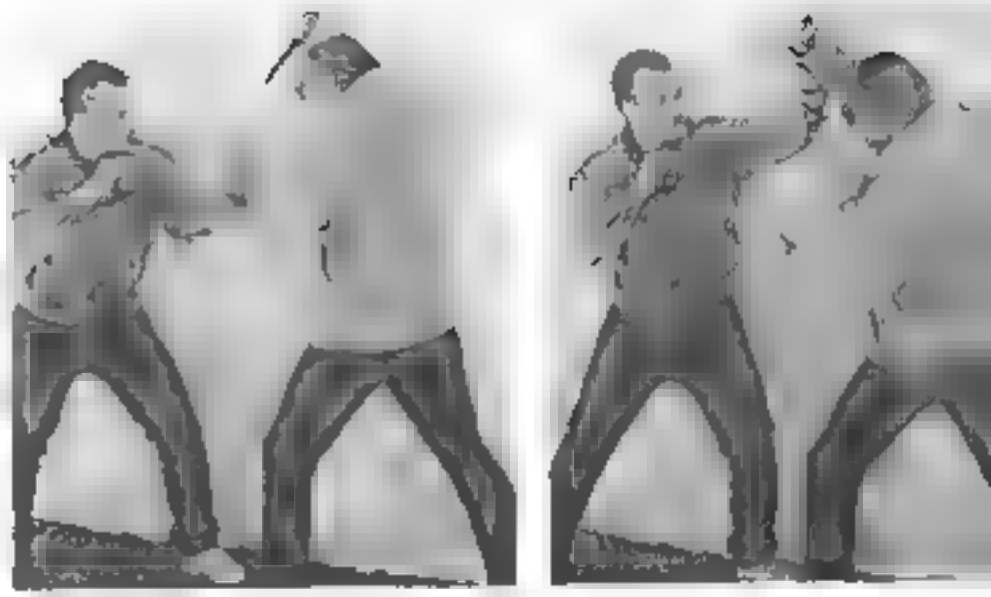
Fighting Grip

This is a common grip found in magazines and books. It is, however, "arm-chair warrior" theory.

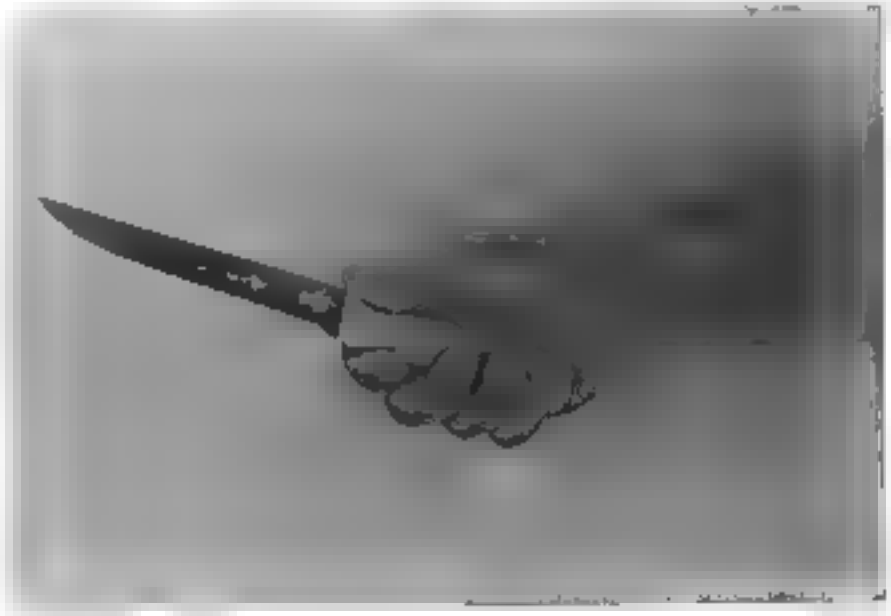
With this grip, the thumb does not wrap around the handle but rests on top of the knife handle. The blade extends out from the thumb at the top of the hand. You might feel comfortable using this grip, but it is not practical. It is not as secure as the hit grip because the thumb is not used properly—to grip any object firmly, you must use your thumb. Try both and make your own evaluation.

Hit Grip

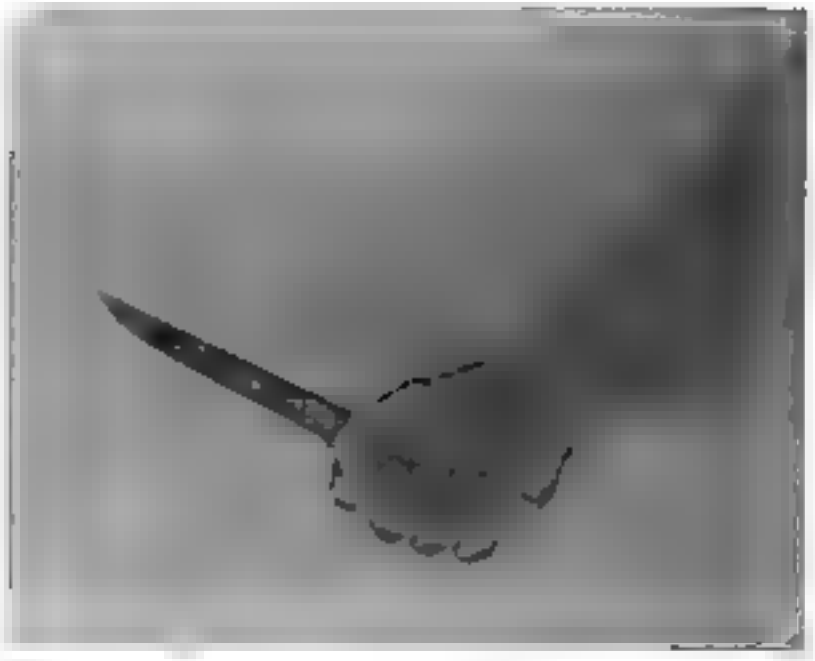
The hit grip is primarily for penetration. *It is the preferred grip for serious business.*



The overhead, ice pick grip knife attack is another knife fighting myth perpetuated by TV, books, and the martial arts.



Fighting grip.



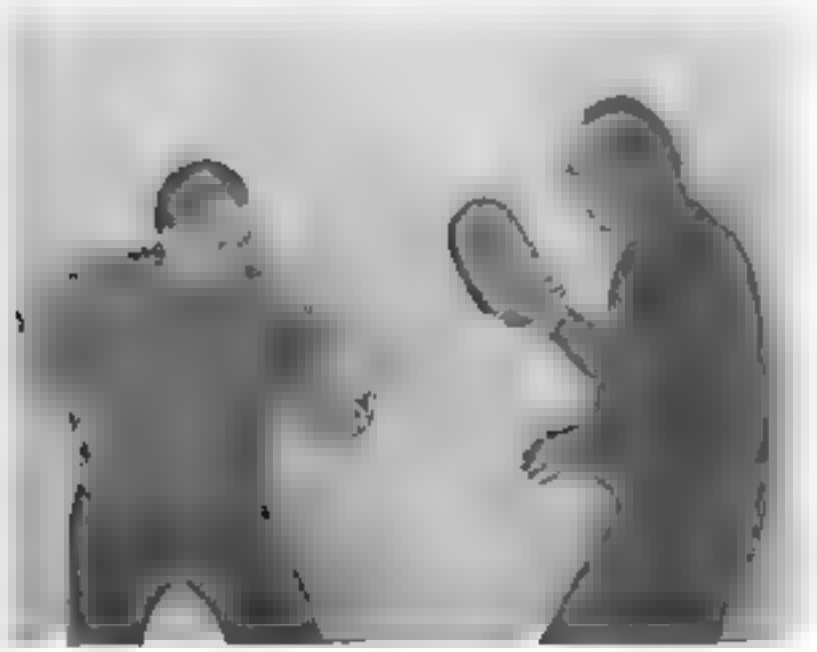
Hit grip.

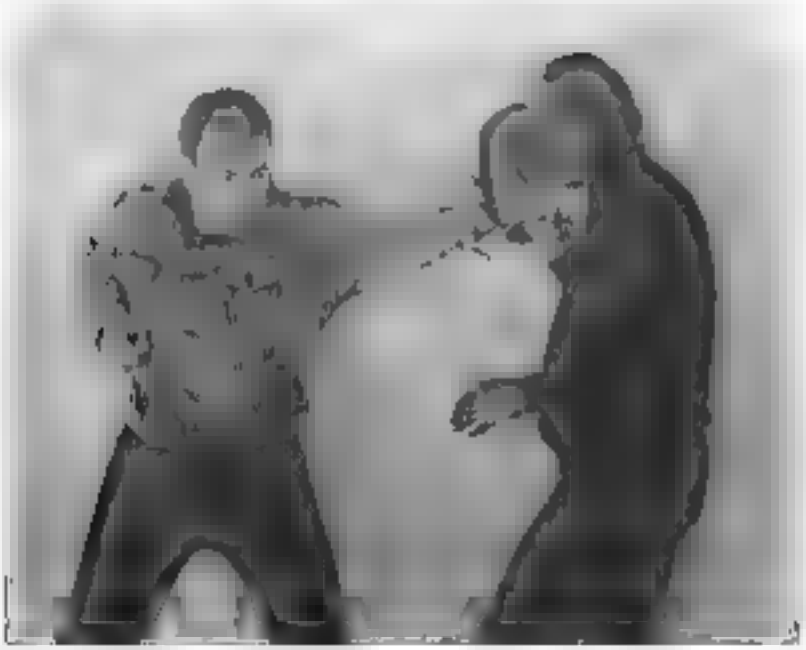
The hand is wrapped around the handle into a fist with the blade extending from the top of the hand, between the thumb and index finger. Your thumb is the key element for a secure grip.

KNIFE FIGHTING STANCE

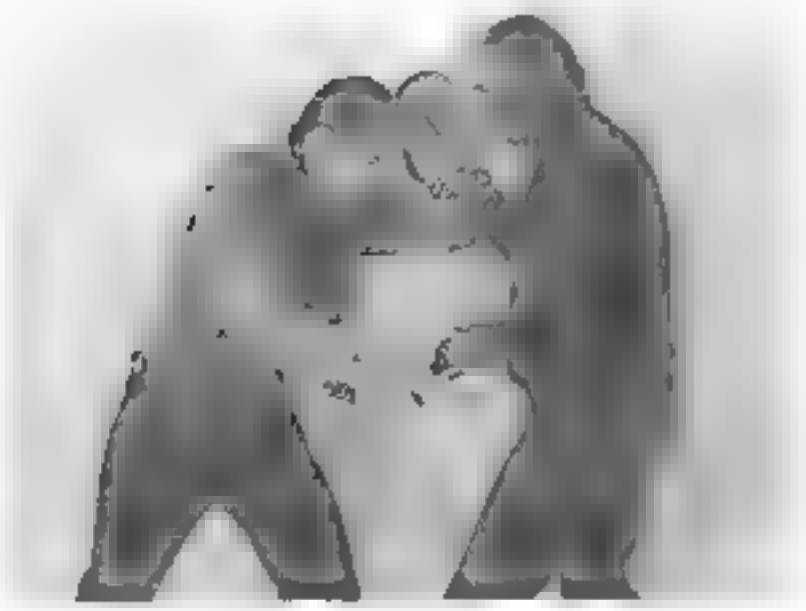
A proper knife fighting stance starts with a solid foundation. Your feet should be about shoulder width apart, keep your knees bent, and lean forward at the waist. Your lead hand is extended and open, ready to strike. Your knife hand is retracted and close to the body so your opponent cannot attempt to disarm you without bringing himself into your striking and stabbing range. Keep your eyes on your opponent at all times—as mentioned earlier a knife fight is often over in a matter of seconds. Remember this when assuming a stance, practicing footwork, etc.

A proper knife fighting stance.





The photographs on this and the following page show a one-two attack drill using a focus glove



ONE-TWO ATTACK

There are only two basic effective frontal attacks. The first—the foundation of any frontal attack—is the one two strike. Also known as a combination, one-two blows are individual techniques applied in quick sequence. This is never a single blow—you must first lead with an empty-hand strike and then follow through with a kick thrust. Each technique must be effective and there should not be any hesitation between strikes.

It is not difficult for a soccer goalie to block a single shot, but if a second and third ball were shot at the same time, at least one is likely to get through. The same is true in unarmed and weapon attacks. For experienced fighters, single blows are too easy to block and do not create openings in the opponent's defense.

Lead (Empty) Hand Strikes

In a one-two attack, you first strike with your empty hand to create an opening. The eyes are the primary

A lead hand strike to the eyes, the initial movement of a one-two attack.

target. Actual eye contact is not as important as general vision interference. This will force your opponent to close his eyes, lose his balance, or cause him to overreact. One of these will be his natural reaction to your first offensive strike, and your opening will be created.

Empty-hand strikes should be quick and hard and utilize the entire body, not just the arm. Fist or palm strikes can be effective; however, a palm strike is usually best. You may also use a palm strike to grab for control (see "Control of the Opponent's Left Side," below). Following the empty-hand strike (or a convincing feint), the retracted knife hand thrusts immediately for the opening. Never allow your opponent time for a defense opportunity.

Note: If you are unarmed when attacked by someone with a knife, the primary offensive targets for you are the testicles, eyes, and throat. Go for them.

[redacted]

The second basic frontal attack is the three-step attack, also called a "deceptive lead." Again, never lead

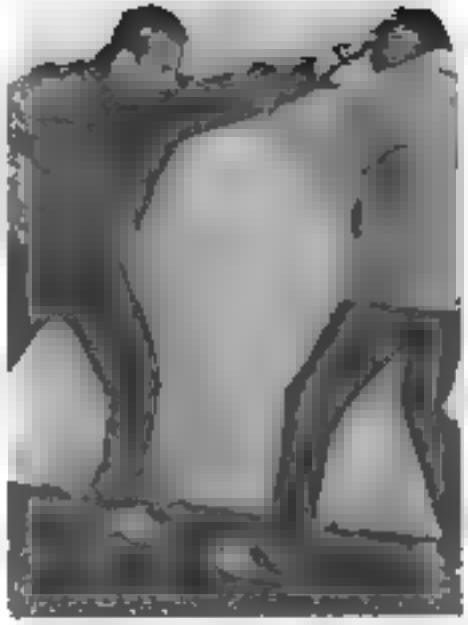
with the weapon in the critical zone (the distance at which you can be hit by a particular individual). The safe distance is further than the opponent's outstretched [redacted].

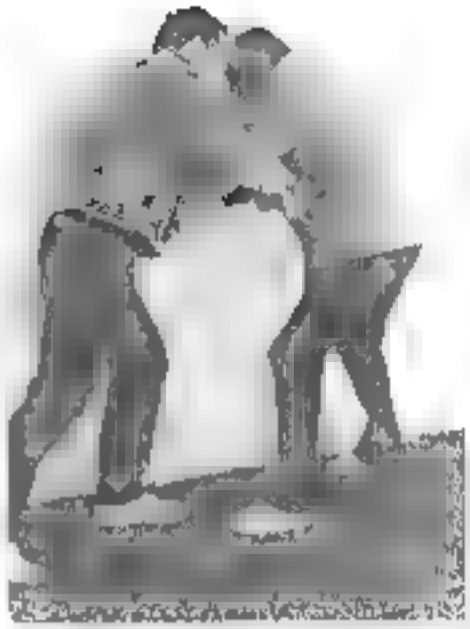
The only significant difference between the one-two attack and this method is that, in a three-step attack, you intentionally feint with the knife while out of range, luring your opponent into a premature strike. This will open his defense. Immediately enter the critical zone with the knife retracted and apply the basic one-two movement.

Stab the enemy until he is down, regardless of where you are punched, kicked, stabbed, elbowed, or whatever. Once your adversary is down, you must take him out. Make absolutely certain that he will die.

CONTROL OF THE OPPONENT'S LEFT SIDE

Your opponent's left side is a primary knife target for several critical reasons. If you have control of your opponent's left side (or right side if you're left-handed), it is difficult for him to protect that area which has





An effective attack combination. Starting on the previous page, the attacker performs a one-two attack, then gains control of the defender's left side by grabbing his arm and spinning him. The attacker stabs the exposed, unprotected area.

become your most convenient target—his now exposed left kidney, lung, etc. It is even more effective if you can actually turn him to the side once you have control. After all, grappling does occur in knife attacks. Study the photographs carefully.

AN EFFECTIVE ATTACK COMBINATION

1) From an offensive knife stance, quickly step forward (lead foot first, rear foot following), closing the gap while simultaneously striking with the lead (empty) hand.
2) Immediately stab with the reacted knife hand.
3) Grab the left arm (or jacket sleeve, collar, back of neck, hair) and spin the opponent to your left, exposing his left side.
4) Continue stabbing the opponent in any exposed area, as many times as possible.

TARGETS

A vital target is relative to *who* you are trying to stop. With many opponents, even the most meaningless blow will put them down. With other individuals, however, your best shot to a vital target will not stop them, especially if the vital target is based on martial arts theory. Remember, the key word is *determination*. You can hit some people hard enough in the arm to make them run. There is a difference between what will stop a pussy and what will stop a violent, determined opponent—a *big* difference!

Two-thirds of the heart is on the left side of the chest. If you aim for the middle of the chest, your knife is apt to rebound off the sternum. Remember, karate studio theory and laboratory conditions are not real-life situations. Unless you have actually been in a knife fight, it is *all* theory.

The neck is a vital target from any angle. The optimal entrance to the spinal cord lies at the base of the skull. If you are able to attack your opponent from the rear, put your left hand around his throat or mouth and pull him backward and down as you thrust your knife. Attempt to push out through the front of the neck. Use the hit grip with maximum force.

Even though there is no such thing as a "silent kill" with a knife, a sharp piece of metal through the neck at the base of the skull is one of the quickest killing methods at your disposal. Unfortunately, it is not the most practical target since it is difficult to attack someone from behind.

Certain "experts" might tell you not to put your hand over an opponent's mouth because he could bite your

finger off. This is nonsense. In a violent attack, if you put your hand over the opponent's mouth as hard as you can and immediately follow with a knife thrust, I guarantee he will not bite your hand. If he is getting a blade pumped into his back, biting your finger will not enter his mind.

Hamstring Cut

Warning: This technique cannot be included in the basic attacks—it is a more advanced move.

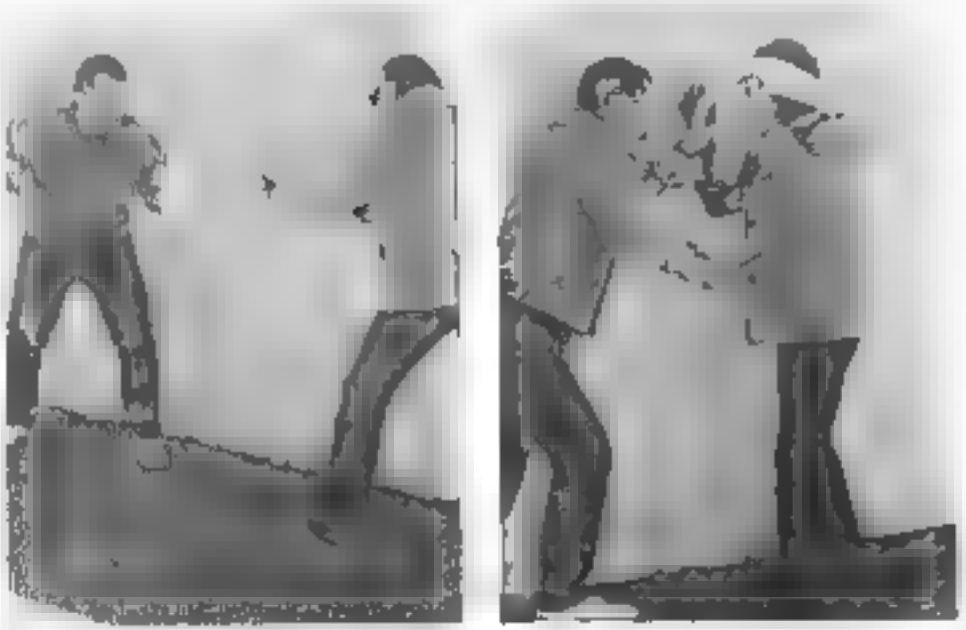
This target is most effective when adapted to the deceptive lead. Lead with the knife hand outside the critical zone and lure the opponent into a premature attack. Hold the knife hand low, with the arm extended. In this case, grabbing the leg will substitute for the empty-hand strike. Once you have control of the leg, cut the hamstring, just above the back of the knee, or stab the torso if your knife does not have a cutting edge.

This is but one of many situations that would enable you to gain control of your opponent's leg. Once you have control of his leg, you can attack him either while he is standing or on the ground. It is not difficult to put him on his back after you have control of his leg.

OBJECT JAB

An object jab serves the same purpose as the empty-hand strike. The objective is to confuse or blind the opponent so that he will be unprotected for the follow-up blow.

Instead of an empty-hand strike, use your lead hand to throw an object into your opponent's face, then immediately thrust the knife. The object can be a shirt, sand, ashtray, chemicals, shoe, cigarette or any thing. This technique is an effective defense against a knife attack as well.



An object jab using a towel.

INSERTING THE KNIFE

The time between your empty-hand strike and the knife thrust should be as short as possible. Continue to pump the knife into the opponent until he is down and/or dead, depending on the situation.

In a life-threatening situation, *get whatever you can, when you can, as many times as you can!*

OTHER WEAPON ATTACKS

The stance for fighting with other weapons is similar to knife fighting. The same fighting principles also apply regardless of the weapon, i.e., police baton, hammer, tire iron, car antenna, stick, or pipe. Never lead with the weapon within striking range, and use the empty-hand strike (or feint) to set up the weapon-hand strike.

Weapon strikes should be similar to hand strikes.

Effective combinations should move smoothly from one target to another while maintaining proper balance, defense, and power. Just as a right cross should be followed by a left hook, a baton strike to the left side of the opponent's head should be followed by a backhand strike to the right side, and so forth.

These are basic, effective, natural movements utilizing maximum power and balance. If this scientific approach fails or is not instinctive enough for you, *then hit him in the head until he's dead!*

Your anatomy permits certain movements that can appear simple and direct in a fight, but that does not necessarily make them practical fighting techniques. A crosshand block is an example of this—you can do it, but it might tie your arms up, a position you definitely do not want them in. You must be able to distinguish between techniques that are physically possible to apply in a fight and techniques that are practical. There is a big difference!

Chapter Four

Knife Defense

The following list outlines the basic principles of defense against a knife attack. Some principles are specific and some are generic.

1) *Prevention.* Prevention is a vague concept. Prevention, awareness, and mental attitude are closely related. Prevention involves action on your part "before the fact" (before an attack actually occurs). The information in this book should be used as the foundation for such preventative action.

2) *Mental Attitude.* This is the single most important factor in combat survival. Proper mental attitude (in your training and in a real situation), cannot be overemphasized.

3) *Awareness.* Always be alert and aware of your surroundings. It is extremely important to take the element of surprise away from your opponent.

4) *Offense.* A good offense is your primary defense. Often a strong offense is the only defense that is needed. Fighting is so extremely quick that offense and defense are, at most times, simultaneous. *But you must wait for the proper opening before going on the offensive against an armed opponent!*

5) *Expect to be hit.* Even the best defensive fighters get hit. You must expect to receive some damage in any fight. To think otherwise will destroy your concentration in an actual attack. Remember this for your training objectives.

6) *Keep your eyes open.* Never take your eyes off your opponent (or potential opponent), especially when you are hit, which is the most difficult time to do so. Always expect an attack if someone is within striking range.

7) *Protect your back at all times.* Never turn your back on any opponent at any time! No hold, throw or kick that requires you to present your rear to the opponent is practical. Protect your backside at all times whether grappling or standing. Stay off your back and keep your opponent off it as well!

8) *Keep moving.* This is a must in defense. A moving target is more difficult to hit and your opponent cannot get set offensively. Effective movement is not 'dancing' around the opponent. Avoid exaggerated movements—try to move the *minimum effective distance.* An overreaction or improper movement on your part can throw off your balance and good balance is crucial when defending against a knife attack.

9) *Instinctive defensive reflexes seldom make effective fighting reactions.* Closing the eyes when an object looms close is a "natural" reaction, but it is hazardous in a fight. Work to avoid all such instinctive defensive reflexes.

10) *Be direct and simple.* Eliminate the complexity and quantity of any techniques you must use to defend yourself.

11) *Finish the job.* If you are unarmed, never leave the scene if your opponent is not incapacitated. Otherwise, you might be facing him a few minutes later armed with a gun, with his companions, etc. As

A proper unarmed knife defense stance.

long as your opponent is physically capable of harming you, there is no such thing as excessive force. Do not let mercy pleadings make you stop your assault, either. As mentioned earlier, conversation is a common occurrence with a punk who has bitten off more than he can chew. He lost all his rights when he decided to attack you. Your compassion in a violent situation could get you killed. The biggest mistake he made, and the one that he will have to pay dearly for, was choosing to attack you!

12) *Don't stick around.* Kill the enemy and escape as quickly as possible. In most situations, successfully leaving the scene requires more skill (and luck) than a successful attack or defense.

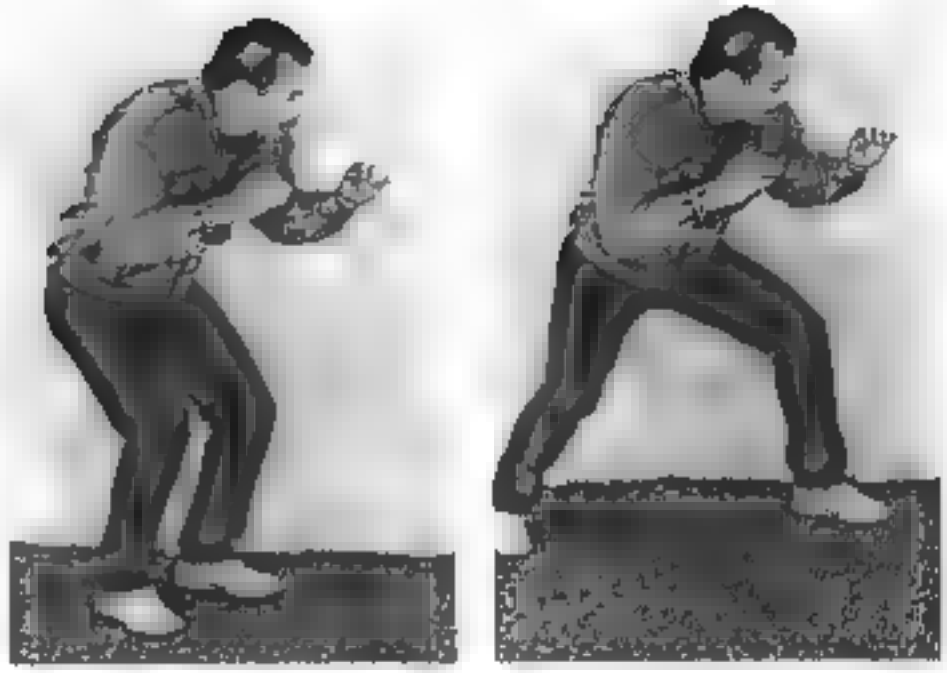
KNIFE DEFENSE STANCE

All defensive and offensive maneuvers should begin with a good foundation. The most effective is a modified boxing stance:

1) Keep your hands open.

A poor knife defense stance. The defender is standing erect and facing the attacker straight-on.

2. Never stand erect or facing the opponent straight-on. You will be unable to protect yourself in this position even though it is a natural reaction.
3. Emphasize protecting your torso organs, since they are prime knife targets.
4. Keep your stance low by bending forward at the waist.
5) Keep your knees bent and maintain proper placement of your feet, similar to the foot position of a boxing stance (i.e., not too narrow and not too wide). This is the foundation of your balance, mobility, power and leverage - anything less will sacrifice all of these vital defense principles.
6) Keep your eyes straight ahead and open at all times, especially when you are hit, which is the most difficult time.



Two examples of poor foot position. In the first photo the feet are too close and in the second they are too far apart.

No matter how good your stance is, you cannot protect all areas at all times. Nonetheless, your attacker is only going to get as close as he can before receiving serious interference from you. Your hands will provide most of the necessary interference.

You should be proficient at the fundamental stance and hand techniques before you attempt variations. In practical applications, you will require extensive training and experience before your basic techniques are effective.

DEFENSE AGAINST ARM GRABS

Be aware that an experienced knife fighter might attempt to control and attack your left side by grabbing and turning you. You must never allow the attacker to grab your left arm or control your left side in any way, and never turn to expose your left side. This is reversed, of course, if your attacker is left-handed.

It should be obvious why you don't allow the attacker to control your left side. Note that by the third photograph, the defender is completely exposed and defenseless. In reality, the sequence would take only seconds to complete.

The positions of your stance and left arm are crucial in providing a good defense. Block with your left hand only when the knife is thrust at you. Your stance should be such that the knife approaches your body between your left arm and your rib cage. Again, this is reversed if your attacker holds the knife in his left hand since he will then try to expose your right side.

Your right (retracted) hand is not "paralyzed"—it is waiting for a possible offensive (or defensive) opportunity.

GRAPPLING AND KNIVES

Oftentimes situations will arise that involve grappling, no matter how proficient you are at defensive tactics while standing up. Some individuals will intentionally grapple before they stab you. Getting stabbed during grappling is just one of the many situations that could develop in a typical streetfight. You never know who you are dealing with, so never underestimate anyone.

This is also true from your (defensive) viewpoint. If your opponent is in a standing position and you are determined to take him down, you can, but only if you are willing to pay the price.

One of the many examples of how you can be stabbed during a grappling situation.

Another version of grappling and knives.

Trapping with the lead hand.

PRINCIPLES OF TRAPPING

A trap is a glorified slap that can remain in contact with the opponent's limb. It is used to fend off the attacker's thrusts. Trapping is done quickly and hard usually with the lead hand, from the knife defense stance.

A trap is *not* to be confused with a *hold*. Do not attempt to hold the knife or arm of the attacker. An experienced fighter will retract the knife hand instantly, making it extremely dangerous to attempt a hold.

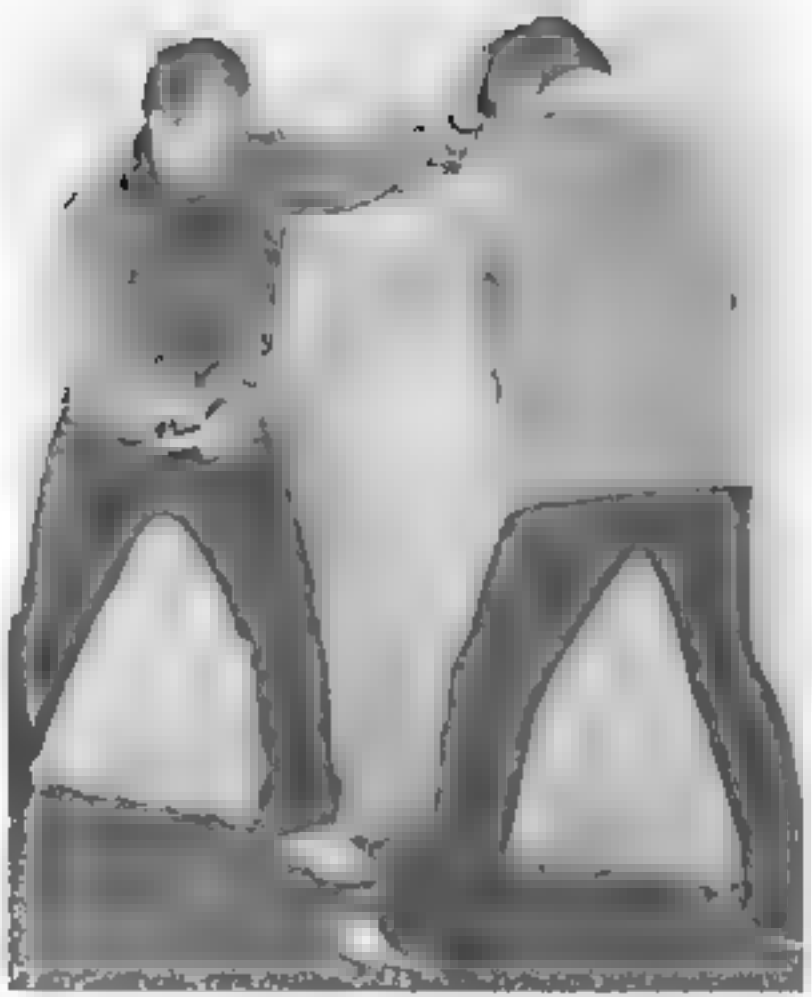
If you are attacked, the immediate objective is to trap (fend off the knife thrusts, until there is an opportunity to counterattack or run. If it is at all possible, run if you are unarmed. This is not a schoolyard fistfight.

If you cannot avoid trapping with your right hand (e.g. your opponent is left-handed), the opponent will be close enough that you must now use your left lead hand for

offense and your right (power) hand to trap. The key here is to be flexible in your defense—don't be locked into trapping only with your lead hand because the situation could change in a matter of seconds, forcing you to alter your defense.

Again, your attacker's natural reaction will be to retract his knife hand after a thrust. You must strike to the eyes or throat *before* the knife hand has been retracted. Once the knife is retracted, he will strike again from a protected position.

Never try to force any technique in knife defense. An opportunity must present itself before you attempt an offensive strike. It would be difficult, at best, to create that opportunity. Your major emphasis should be on defense until the weapon is in a less dangerous position. This is important: you are *countering* in knife defense, you are not on the offensive! The opponent with the knife obviously has more control of the situation and therefore should initiate the offensive.



Trapping with the power hand. A real knife fight is fast and unpredictable, so you must be able to adjust your defense at a moment's notice.

Your focal point belongs on the weapon during this stage. Peripheral vision is important to keep track of the rest of the opponent's body.

Keep moving, even in a confined area. Never let the opponent get "painted" (solid footing) to allow a more powerful attack. Run, defend, or attack, but never let your mental attitude become passive.

COUNTERATTACK ANGLES

The angle at which the opponent attacks determines the angle at which you are going to counterattack. You cannot force a powerful knife thrust in an opposite direction. Attempting to do so would be fatal against an experienced attacker.

If the opponent attacks at a high angle, your initial counterattack should be upward. If the opponent attacks at a downward angle, you should counter downward. *Caution.* This could be the setup for a three-step attack, so always be cautious of an extended knife hand. If you initiate your counterattack prematurely, you could get hit with the empty hand and then the knife hand would immediately follow. With all techniques, avoid exaggerated movements.

These are not meant to be specific techniques that must be used in a knife fight. You always have other defense options within the angle of attack. After analyzing options and variations of techniques (through application), formulate principles that work best for you.

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Most punks do not cause trouble by themselves. They live by the concept of safety and strength in numbers. Although many gang members need that kind of security, they are nonetheless still dangerous in a pack. Even the mighty tiger can be killed by a pack of wild dogs. In a multiple attack situation, one fact remains constant.

you are at an extreme disadvantage against a group, even when the group is as small as two.

Whether or not you will survive a group attack is determined by the determination and motivation of the gang, the number of attackers, their attributes, and your attributes. In a group attack, you do not control the situation, no matter how much you try to convince yourself otherwise. Therefore, the least emphasis is placed on your attributes.

Getting down to the truth, if the group has any motivation at all and is comprised of more than two young kids, you are in serious trouble. If the gang is armed and determined, you will not survive unarmed and may not come away even if you are armed.

Contrary to self defense magazines, I will not insult your intelligence by providing prearranged techniques for unarmed defense against armed, multiple attackers.

A premeditated, determined, armed attack is an *execution*. It is not a self-defense situation. Scenario: a small group comes up to you and one of the members asks to bum a cigarette. You are surrounded and you know they're looking for trouble. Do you initiate a preemptive strike? Without a firearm in your hand and the element of surprise on your side, you are in very serious trouble.

Group attack situations are the least predictable of all assaults. Unfortunately, there are no prearranged "fits-all" techniques that are effective. Do not let anyone tell you there are, because you will only be fooling yourself.

A martial arts instructor who claims simple solutions to group attacks should be avoided like the plague. His "style" has an answer for every situation, but his solution is nothing more than studio theory. There are simply too many prearranged techniques in the traditional martial arts to be practical in a real incident involving a gang of attackers.

If you find yourself able to fight back in a group attack situation, at all costs do not let yourself be held. Stay

free and striking. Do not kick. Any kick is risky, and against multiple attackers it is insanity! Remember, kicking stability is promoted by the elimination of resistance, and you *will* be facing resistance when assaulted by a gang.

At this point you are probably expecting me to tell you what a great asset clear thinking is and how "keeping your head" is of paramount importance in a group attack. Sorry to disappoint you!

You are fighting these bastards to the death! It is happening *now*, not next week! Your subconscious will to survive is going to control your actions at this point, not your conscious, clear thinking. Remember, any person has the capacity for violence if he has the motivation, right environment, and the situation warrants the violence.

Chapter Five

Training

Training for any kind of violent encounter occurs every moment of your life. Whether or not it is productive depends on how you handle each situation.

MENTAL TRAINING

Fighting is the epitome of aggression, and mental attitude is the single most important factor in combat. The will to win is far more important than the skill to win. Your greatest enemy in combat could be *you* if you hold back during a violent encounter.

Your mind must be free from prearranged techniques and instead be programmed for direct, violent action. Your entire "being" should be determined to accomplish one objective: put the opponent down and make sure that he stays there.

Let your subconscious mind take control. This subconscious state of fighting does not mean fighting in a trance or "going crazy." It means removing all prearranged techniques and conscious, planned reactions from your mind.

There is no way you can have effective, prearranged responses to unknown actions. If you think about a

specific defense or offense, you will block your subconscious survival (or predatory) instincts. If you train correctly, your moves should come automatically and instinctively the day you do become involved in a real situation.

It is true that conscious action (your opponent's attack) will usually be faster than your subconscious reaction (your defense). Your subconscious reaction (survival instinct), however, is faster than your conscious reaction (planned response). Conscious action beats subconscious reaction in an attack, but subconscious (automatic) movement beats conscious (planned) movement in your defense.

You should be able to control your mind and the degree of injury you inflict on your attacker. This is meant to encourage the *unleashing* of your attack, not its restraint! Fighting (possibly for your life) means inflicting as much damage as possible, in the shortest time possible—the first with the most!

You need a "light switch" (instant) temper when it is appropriate, but you must still be able to spread your anger over a long period of time. In other words, you must be able to extend your violent motivation for as long as it takes to eliminate the problem and/or opponent. Depending on the circumstances, it might take one minute, six months, or five years, but it must be there when the time comes for you to fight.

Do not let physical appearances intimidate you, even though this subconscious reaction has been developed since elementary school. Do not build confidence through your appearance either, e.g., weight lifting. Bodybuilding, without steroids, is an excellent training supplement, but it is not the final solution to your personal defense.

Never underestimate your opponent—he could possess concealed advantages. After all, you cannot "see" fighting skill and experience, endurance, determination, speed, power, or concealed weapons until it is too late!

You should present a confident image at all times. This often can prevent an attack. Most predators, man included, seek out the weak, not the strong.

You must acquire a tough mental attitude. This does not mean trying to act tough. The tough guy attitude is bullshit unless you are actually a tough fighter.

To develop a tough mental attitude takes lots of time and as much effort as you can provide. It means going a little—or a lot—further than the other guy. It means competing against yourself. It must be developed gradually. The longer you have been "soft," the longer it will take. The American lifestyle is soft to begin with, so it will take even more effort from you.

BASIC TRAINING

All training should be simple and direct, practiced at full speed, and done with a training partner. Solo practice is not advised. Practice with many different partners, as well, to get used to different kinds of fighters.

Play a glorified game of tag using a training knife. When your partner has "stabbed" you with penetrating power, change positions. Practice offense and defense against an armed and unarmed opponent. The degree of realism is contingent on the individuals involved. It is advisable to wear protective gear so that you can realistically practice hand techniques. There is no other way (legally) to determine the practicality of your techniques than to test them in full-contact, "anything goes" training. Slow-motion and "pulled" punches do not perfect or test techniques.

No matter how tough and determined you are during full-contact training, you must remember that it is only training. In a real attack, you should have the attitude that no one can stop you!

Use "scenario" mental conditioning to draw your

violent power out during full-contact training. Suppose, for instance, that you had to watch your mother, daughter, or wife being gang raped and beaten. Is it fair to assume violent motivation on your part? If not, you should seek psychological counseling as soon as possible!

Never panic, either during full-contact training or in a real-life violent situation. Certainly this is easier said than done. It makes sense, but how do you go about ensuring that you won't panic at the most inopportune moment? Since every situation is different, you must practice, practice, practice! Add as much realism, imagination, and variation to your training sessions as you possibly can.

There are literally thousands of ways to train for fighting. *Be creative!* New situations will add to your experience and knowledge, so situational training is very important. Practice realistic fighting situations whenever possible. Use your imagination to set up the scenarios.

Feel free to gather your skills from any and all individuals who are *experienced* fighters and know what they are talking about. Avoid methodologies that teach you bad habits. If you follow the discipline within this book, you will be able to discern between the good and the bad. Practice, think, observe, learn, and live.

MOVEMENT AND FOOTWORK

Basic, balanced movement is fundamental to fighting. When the right-handed fighter moves back from a knife-defense stance, he must move his right foot first, and then the lead (left) foot follows. To move forward, a righty should step with the lead (left) foot first and follow with the right. To move left, the left foot moves first, with the right following. To move right, move the right foot first, followed by the left.

This movement feels natural to some and awkward to others. Keep practicing until it feels comfortable and

automatic. Avoid exaggerated movements. If you do not move correctly, it could be more dangerous than not moving at all.

Never cross your feet. Analyze carefully any self-defense technique that involves crossing the feet or turning your back on the opponent.

BREATH CONTROL

Inhale, exhale, inhale, exhale. The only difference is that during strenuous exercise or actual fighting, breathing is exaggerated.

Breath control in actual combat will depend on your previous physical conditioning, your emotional state, and your adrenalin control. Breathe as slowly and as deeply as possible. In through the nose and out through the mouth, just like they told you in junior high school physical education.

The only practical way to develop breath control is during strenuous and/or stressful situations, not while sitting in a yoga position. One of the most beneficial methods of breath control training is combining correct breathing techniques during weight lifting and running. Any drill practiced in a relaxed state, without physical and mental stress, is not going to be beneficial for this area of your training.

EYE TRAINING

Martial artists often try to train you to develop a "sixth sense" before they even begin development of your first sense: vision.

Keeping your eyes open during a fight requires practice in contact training with a fierce determination to overcome the instinct to close them. Effective fighting techniques are useless if the eyes are not trained to remain open during contact! This elementary requirement is too often ignored in training. Keep your eyes open at *all* times.

PRACTICE DRILL

Using a real knife, attack a dummy target that you can penetrate. A human-form target is best.

For the best results, do not answer the following questions until you have completed this drill.

Attack the dummy as fast as you can (both hand speed and closing the gap), as hard as you can, for as long as you can, from as many angles as you can.

Now answer these questions to analyze the results of the drill:

1) What thoughts were running through your mind?
2) What was your mental attitude?
3) Could you visualize a real opponent?
4) Did you raise your adrenalin level through visualization (scenario mental conditioning)?
5) Did you use your empty hand for striking?
6) Did you use your empty hand for grabbing?
7) Did you use your empty hand after the initial strike?
8) What was your power level?
9) How long did you last?
10) When did your blows start to slow down?
11) Were there problems with your grip?
12) Did you vary your striking angles?
13) How did you close the gap between you and the "opponent"?
14) How balanced were you?
15) Did you injure yourself?
16) Did you immediately leave the scene?
17) The most important question: *Did you kill the opponent?*

Even though the dummy did not hit back, this is an effective basic drill. Work on the mistakes you made or the areas that need improvement.